

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-08 PA-02 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 XMB-04 TRSE-00 DOTE-00 /045 W

-----092170 030600Z /20

R 021233Z MAR 78

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0659

INFO: RUEHDC/USDOC

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

UNCLAS LIBREVILLE 0533

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, GB

SUBJ: AIR GABON FLEET EXPANSION

1. LOCAL NEWSPAPER RECENTLY ANNOUNCED THAT GABON WOULD TAKE DELIVERY OF THEIR BOEING 737 IN MAY AND BOEING 747 IN JUNE 1978. GABONESE HAD HOPED TO TAKE DELIVERY OF BOTH PLANES BEFORE END OF MARCH WHEN AIR GABON LEASE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AIRLINES B-747 COMBI EXPIRES. STRIKES AT BOEING PLANT WERE BLAMED FOR DELAY. 747 PRESENTLY IN USE WILL BE RETURNED TO MEA ON SCHEDULE, AND THE PRESIDENTIAL DC-8 WILL COVER THE 747 ROUTES UNTIL DELIVERY OF 747. DC-8 WILL MORE THAN HANDLE 747 PASSENGER TRAFFIC (192 SEATS VERSUS B-747'S 176). THERE WAS NO EXPLANATION OF HOW AIR GABON WOULD HANDLE FREIGHT COMMITMENTS OF ITS 747 RUNS.

2. IN SAME ARTICLE, JEAN-LOUIS MESSAN, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF AIR GABON, STATED THAT DESPITE DEBTS INCURRED TO CIRIBANK AND U.S. EX-IM BANK TO PURCHASE THE BOEINGS, AIR GABON WOULD BE PROFITABLE IN THREE OR AT MOST FOUR YEARS. HE DENIED RUMORS THAT THE BOEING PURCHASES WOULD BE CANCELLED.

3. ARTICLE INDICATED THAT ONE METHOD OF FOSTERING  
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EARLY PROFITABILITY IS LIQUIDATION OF PRESENT DEBTS BY LIQUIDATION OF PRESENT AIR GABON COMPANY AND REORGANIZATION. ONLY SKETCHY INFORMATION PROVIDED ON THIS.

4. IF LIQUIDATION DOES OCCUR, LOSSES WOULD BE SHARE BETWEEN GOG (OWNS 70PERCENT OF 2 BILLION CFA CAPITAL) AND THE FRENCH GROUP SOFPAG (SOCIETE FRANCAISE DE PARTI-

CIPATION A AIR GABON - AIR FRANCE AND UTA). OF PRE-  
SENT 12 MEMBER BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 9 ARE NAMED BY GOG  
AND 3 BY SOFPAG.YATES

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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Sheryl P. Walter  
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**Markings:** Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014